Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 14 Number 10 November 2017

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 19th November 2017: Cherlapally Tank. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 6.00AM.

It has been quite some time since we visited this location. Cherlapally Tank has always been a productive site, and we hope to find a good number of migrants, including the Bitterns. This would be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532). We will be car-pooling, so please let Surekha know if you need a ride, and also if you can accommodate any others in your vehicle. Non-BSAP members are most welcome; however, a voluntary contribution to the Society of Rs.100.00 each will be appreciated.

INDOOR MEETING: Talk by Aasheesh Pittie: BIRDS IN BOOKS
Tuesday, 21st November 2017, 6.00PM: Hamburg Hall, Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

Aasheesh, President and one of the founder members of BSAP, is no stranger to us. He is also Founder Editor of Indian Birds, a magazine devoted to Indian ornithology. Apart from this, he is an internationally-known ornithologist. Aasheesh has brought out a magnum opus, 'Birds In Books', which is a bibliography covering 300 years of South Asian ornithologiacal literature published in every conceivable book, magazine, scientific paper, etc. Aasheesh will enlighten us about the usefulness of the book, what prompted him to undertake this stupendous task and how he went about compiling this mind-boggling data.

BIRDS AT EDULABAD THROUGH THREE SEASONS

Text & Photos: Sita Susarla

The Lakshminarayana Lake or the Edulabad Lake is situated in Rangareddy district, Ghatkesar Mandal. We have been visiting this lake regularly since November 2016, and our birding experiences through winter, summer and rainy seasons have been quite interesting. We visited the lake about half a dozen times between November 2016 and August 2017, hoping to see the birdlife during different seasons.

We could not do any birding during the visit in November 2016, as the lake was full and reaching almost all the way up to the road. In February 2017, the waters had receded and we were able to access the lake shore. The Little Stints (*Calidris minuta*), Wood Sandpipers (*Tringa glareola*), Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Black-winged Stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*), Red-naped Ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*), and Little Egrets (*Egretta garzetta*) were seen in moderate numbers. There were two Spotted Redshanks (*Tringa erythropus*), two Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) and four Spot-billed Pelicans (*Pelecanus philippensis*).

Spot-billed Pelican

The Black-tailed Godwit had begun to develop breeding plumage. On referring to the Grimmett & Inskipp book 'Birds of the Indian Subcontinent', we felt that this Godwit was an Eastern Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa melanuroides*) with horizontal bars across the belly.

Eastern Black-tailed Godwit

One of the Spotted Redshanks also had breeding plumage, with darkening of the head and neck regions. Two Black-eared Kites (*Milvus migrans lineatus*) were seen hovering very close to the ground. After some time one of them landed on a rock and sprawled its wings in a bid to bathe them in the morning rays of the sun, while the other perched on a nearby pole.

Black-eared Kite

A couple of months later, in April 2017, we visited the lake once again to have a glimpse of the winter birds probably in their breeding plumage. There were more than a hundred Little Egrets and a similar number of Black-winged Stilts and a few Great Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*). There were many Black-tailed Godwits that had developed deeper colors than when we had seen them in February, and it was an amazing sight. There were also about five juvenile Wood Sandpipers.

Little Egrets

By May 2017, the lake had receded a lot. The highlight of this visit was the sighting of Pacific Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis fulva*) on the lake shore. There were four of them that we observed for a full half hour before they flew away to the other side of the lake. One of them was in complete breeding plumage while the other was still developing it. This Plover was very distinctly different from the other plovers, with a jet-black head and breast, and a golden-yellow back. It also had a continuous white flank line that separated the upperparts and underparts, running from above the eye to the tail. The Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), which we had earlier sighted in Narara Marine National Park, is the one that bears the closest resemblance to this Plover.

Pacific Golden Plover

The other highlight of the day was the sighting of about twenty to twenty-five Eastern Black-tailed Godwits, with a few of them in complete breeding plumage. There were around 47 Red-naped Ibis. A lone Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) was also spotted.

Red-naped Ibis

In August 2017, the calls of the Rain Quails (*Coturnix coromandelica*) welcomed us. However, the froth in the inflowing waters of a stream, and the smell at that location, suggested that it had some pollutants in it. It was a reminder of the deteriorating condition of lakes in Hyderabad. As the stream made its way into the lake, the waters were teeming with Cormorants and Little Egrets.

Indian Silverbill

Red Avadavat

As we continued with birding on a small plateau-like area near the lake, flocks of Indian Silverbills (*Euodice malabarica*) and Red Avadavats (*Amandava amandava*) were sighted resting on dried twigs. Just then a loud call of the Rain Quail was heard and a few feet ahead we saw it flying away. They had been calling all day; there must have been at least four of them calling from different areas around us.

All in all, Edulabad has been a very productive location for us, and we plan to keep visiting as often as we can.

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Editor's Note: We bring you two different write-ups on the field trip to Himayat Sagar, written by two of our young members.

BIRDING TRIP TO BACKWATERS OF HIMAYAT SAGAR

G Shruti

We started for our birding trip at around 6:15AM and reached Aziz Nagar around 7:00AM, where all the other birders had assembled. From there, after about 15 minutes, we reached this place which was the backwaters of Himayat Sagar. It was a good spot for sighting water birds. The land there was soft and wet. This place was covered with different kinds of crops like paddy, vegetables and also grass. We walked through the foot tracks to move forward. We could spot many beautiful birds; although I am new to birding and didn't know much, I remember some birds like Pond Herons, Black-shouldered Kite, Brahminy Starling, Jacobin Cuckoo, Golden Oriole, Spotted Dove, Glossy Ibis, Black-headed Ibis, Pied Bushchat, Baya Weaver, Grey Heron, and some other common birds like Crow, Drongo, Indian Robin and Swift.

We could even see some of the birds diving, slicing through the sky for hunting prey. After some time, once the sun was up and hot, we took a break and started clearing our doubts, which I remember also led to a discussion about how many birds were residents and how many were migrants. After this pep talk we walked a short distance and had our breakfast under the shade of a tree. We then went back to our homes after a wonderful day of bird watching.

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TRIP REPORT: HIMAYAT SAGAR, October 22, 2017

Text & Photo: V Haresh

On October 22, 2017, I, my father, and my father's friend, Lt Col Suri Babu, along with Shruti and Shravya, set off for Himayat Sagar. We joined the convoy of other birders at Vikarabad, and drove through winding roads of Aziz Nagar leading to our destination. The ride was very refreshing and, as we started spotting birds like Munia, Peahen, Egrets and Drongo, our enthusiasm began to build up.

The snaking convoy slowed through rice fields, where we found abundant birds criss-crossing, and halted at Himayat Sagar. We were at the tail of the trail; I pulled out my camera and started clicking photos, and my father helped me in identifying the names of birds such as Scaly-breasted Munia, Egrets, Brahminy Starling, Red-vented Bulbul, Golden Oriole, etc. We saw a row of Baya Weavers on an electric wire. Moorty uncle was accompanying us and he engaged us in interesting conversation. Meanwhile, one of the birders was accompanied by a Golden Retriever, and Shravya's interest turned from birds to the Retriever!

A part of the group

We slowly headed towards the lake. The path was narrow and slushy; I thanked my father for advising me not to wear my new sneakers. Suddenly my camera failed and shut down, and my father asked me to put it away and stick to binoculars. We were not able to follow the trail as the rain water was flowing through it, so we moved across the fields; there we spotted lots of interesting birds like Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Green Bee-eater, Ashy Prinia, Plain Prinia, Baya Weavers, Common Stonechat, Pied Bushchat, Indian Robin, White-breasted Kingfisher, etc. We also saw a Pied Kingfisher diving to catch fish.

My father and I went near the water body, and here also, we spotted many birds like the Black-shouldered Kite, which was hovering for quite some time before it dived to catch its prey. In the lake a White-breasted Kingfisher was sitting on a tree, and I noted some distinctive features, like the white of the bird which was prominent in the chest portion, and a thick beak (which my father corrected to 'bill'). Among all this activity, we also saw people harvesting the rice and farm produce, and many birders were seen keenly buying from them right there. We sat for a while along the edge of the fields, where we spotted a Jacobin Cuckoo; it had a black crest on its head. Far away on the opposite shore, we saw a Marsh Harrier flying in circles over the lake.

Humayun Taher Uncle was wearing numerous interesting animal badges on his hat. He asked all of us to discuss about the birds we saw, and asked whether anyone had made a complete list. Srikanth Uncle volunteered and read out the names of almost 60 or more birds; I was captivated by the sheer numbers, more than half of which I was not aware of. Then Humayun Uncle asked us how many of those were migratory birds, and birders answered more than 30 birds with their names. One birder asked what mainly influences the birds to migrate from one place to another, and Moorty Uncle answered that it was due to change in temperature and in search of food. Likewise, Humayun Uncle also answered many questions, after which we started to move back.

We were given good company by the Golden Retriever – on the way back, it kept running around, wagging its tail and jumping and leaping as it crossed the rice fields. We settled down at an open place in a field, using a set of rocks as our breakfast table, and had a quick breakfast. I sat on a huge rock and took some photographs with my mobile phone. After having some toast, biscuits and boiled eggs which we shared with Suri Babu Uncle, Shruti and Shravya, I had great fun climbing up and down the rocks, and jumping from one rock to another.

At about 10:45AM, we conveyed our regards to the other birders, thanked Surekha Aunty, and reached the parking point. While walking to the car I collected many flint stones and snail shells. By this time the sun was pretty high up. It was really a nice and wonderful experience, as it gave me a good break from my routine of studies and classes. I couldn't agree more when my father said to his friend that the day had been well begun and well spent.

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Bird Humour

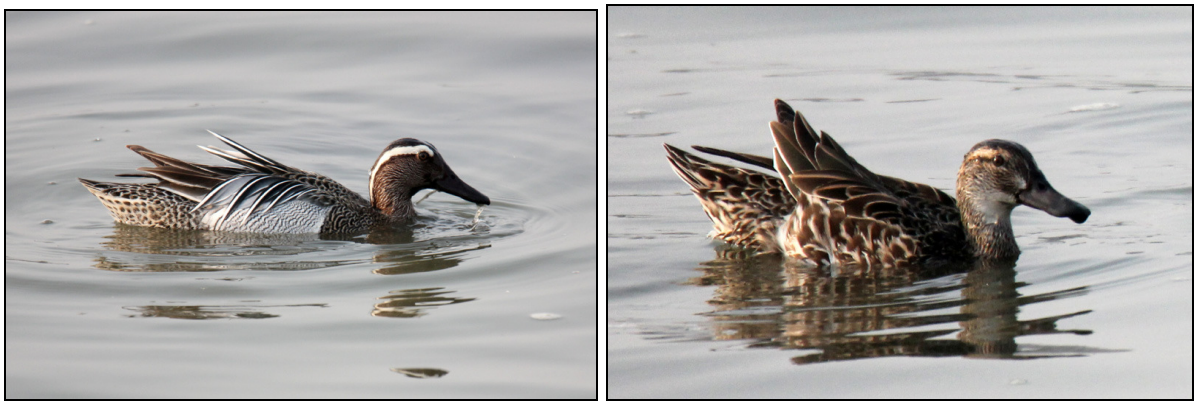
B.C.
EVERYBODY IS TRYING TO KILL ME! ;SOB;
THERE, THERE... IT'S REALLY NOTHING TO LOSE YOUR HEAD OVER.
ANYONE EVER TELL YOU THAT YOU GOT A LOUSY BEDSIDE MANNER?
DR PETER — HEAD SHRINKER

(From Times of India, January 01, 2012)

Bird of the Month

Umesh Mani

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)



Garganey Male (L) and **Female** (R) (Chennai, March 19, 2017)

Order: Anseriformes
Family: Anatidae
Genus: *Anas*
Species: *A. querquedula*
Size: 37-41 cm

Description & distribution: The Garganey is a small dabbling duck with a fairly wide distribution, breeding across large parts of Europe and western Asia; in winter, though, the entire population moves to South Africa, Australia, or the Indian subcontinent, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

The Garganey male is unmistakable, with a pinkish-brown white-speckled head having pronounced white broad eyebrows extending down the sides of the neck. The brown breast stands out in contrast with bluish-grey flanks, wings and shoulders. The female is similar to, and can be confused with, the female of the Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) but is paler, has a more patterned head, with a more prominent pale supercilium, whitish loral spot, a pale line separating the dark eye-stripe from a dark cheek-bar, and a whiter throat (rather than brown-speckled, as in the female Common Teal). It also tends to shake its head more frequently while dabbling.

In flight, the Garganey shows a distinct white belly, blue-grey forewing, and a broad white trailing edge to the wings; the speculum is also very indistinct in comparison to that of the Common Teal. The eclipse male is similar to the female, but with the upperwing pattern of the breeding male.

Habitat & behaviour: The Garganey is usually found in large mixed flocks along with Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers, Common Teals, and other ducks, in freshwater wetlands, coastal lagoons, grassy *jheels*, marshes, reservoirs and lakes. It is usually shy and keeps to emergent vegetation, and does not venture out much on open water. One of the earliest migrants, along with the Common Teal, it starts arriving by August. The Garganey is very fast on the wing, and can also take off very quickly from the water with a fast, twisting wader-like flight.

Its diet is mainly vegetarian, including grain, seeds, tender rice shoots, marsh plants and other aquatic vegetation. During the breeding season, however, it shifts to aquatic invertebrates like crustaceans and molluscs, insects and their larvae or pupae, worms, leeches, tadpoles, small fish and small amphibians. Unlike other dabbling ducks, it does not 'up-end' much, generally preferring to feed by skimming, or by foraging on the edges of the water. The male utters a distinctive cracking mating call, while the female usually restricts herself to a feeble *quack*.

Nesting: The breeding season of the Garganey is mainly between May to June in the Palearctic region (northern Europe to eastern Siberia). The nest is a depression in the grass in wet meadows, lined with down feathers and sometimes with fine grass or other plant material. The usual clutch consists of 6-12 eggs, buffy white with a glossy texture.

Local name: The Garganey is known as *'Chaita'*,*'Kheera'* or *'Patari'* in Hindi,*'Ghila hans'* in Assamese, *'Kardio'* in Gujarati and *'Surit angouba'* (i.e. 'white teal') in Manipuri.

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